UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2023
15 November 1995

W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali says the past year has seen important progress in the Middle East peace process.

* Meeting in Geneva, Secretary-General and President of ICRC review close cooperation between organizations.

* In Haiti, the situation is slowly returning to normal after two days of demonstrations.

* In the Economic and Financial Committee, Member States draw attention to opportunities, risks and uncertainties in globalization of the world economy.

* Traditional approaches to world's refugee problem are increasingly inadequate, UNHCR Sadako Ogata says, launching Second Annual Report on State of World's Refugees.

* In Bosnia, the peace process continues to hold; utility situation is described as moderate.

* The Secretary-General says the United Nations is far from having a rapid reaction capability.

* Committee against Torture is to review measures to carry out provisions of Convention against Torture, in fifteenth session, in Geneva.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said the past year has seen important progress in the Middle East peace process. In a report on the situation in the Middle East, the Secretary-General said the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed in September, represented a significant step forward in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. He said it provided a basis for the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a goal that had long been sought by the United Nations. The Secretary-General expressed the hope that

(more)

For information media—not an official record

the resolve and dedication to peace shown by Israeli and Palestinian leaders would continue to guide them through the transitional stage until a permanent settlement was reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions.

It was his hope that these developments, together with the ongoing implementation of the Israeli-Jordanian peace accord would generate momentum for progress on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace talks leading to a lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to Mr. Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations would continue to support the peace process, politically and economically, in order to reinforce what had been achieved in the course of the negotiations and help build the foundations for a new post-conflict Middle East.

* * *

The situation in the former Yugoslavia was among the subjects of a meeting in Geneva today, between the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Kofi Annan, High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso, and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ibrahima Fall.

This morning, the Mr. Boutros-Ghali visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and met with the President of the ICRC. They reviewed the scope of the extensive cooperation between the two organizations, particularly in Africa and the former Yugoslavia. Both the Secretary-General and the President of the ICRC expressed their gratitude to one another at the closeness of the working relationship and cooperation, according to a spokesman.

The Secretary-General is returning to headquarters today, following his trip to Europe.

* * *

In Haiti, the situation has been slowly returning to normal throughout the country. There was still some unrest in Cap Haitien. Two local journalists had been threatened and one of them abducted, according to a spokesman. The Pakistani battalion was on the alert for any possible difficulties. In Gonaive, the situation was calm. Investigations indicated that United Nations forces were definitely not involved in the shooting incident in which an individual was killed.

* * *

In the Economic and Financial Committee, several Member States have drawn attention to the opportunities, challenges, risks and uncertainties of the process of globalization of the world economy. The Committee has been

continuing its debate on trade and development, science and technology for development and the Programme for the Least Developed Countries.

The representative of Colombia warned that some countries continued to ignore agreed rules of the multilateral trade system, bending to domestic pressures. He said negotiating practices which characterized the Uruguay Round were being repeated in the World Trade Organization, where groups of countries were taking decisions which were then presented to the participants as a fait accompli. He stressed that issues on the agenda of the new organization should not go beyond its mandate.

The representative of China said his country was still being excluded from the World Trade Organization because of interference and obstruction by a few countries.

* * *

Traditional approaches to the world's refugee problem were increasingly inadequate, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata said in Geneva on Wednesday, as she launched the Second Annual Report on the State of the World's Refugees. The nature and scale of modern conflicts, which were almost all internal conflicts, and which intentionally targeted and displaced large numbers of civilians, was one major reason why a new approach was needed, Mrs. Ogata indicated.

The High Commissioner for Refugees said that there are now about fifteen million refugees in the world, or about the same number as in 1990. But the number of internally displaced people who had fled their homes but not crossed international borders had dramatically increased from about two million in 1990 to twelve million in 1995.

Mrs. Ogata told journalists at the press conference launching the annual report that the search for solutions to refugee problems now must focus on a country of origin, as well as on the countries where the refugees sought asylum.

The High Commissioner for Refugees called for greater respect for human rights, including a greater commitment to identify, prosecute, and punish those responsible for war crimes and human rights abuses. As a deterrent to prevent new refugee outflows and to help shape a solution to existing crisis, Mrs. Ogata said that the international community should devote more resources to promote human rights, and to enhance and support the judicial and law-enforcement systems in countries to which refugees are returning. UNHCR staff working in the field on the protection of refugees and displaced people have become, in effect, part of an international human rights presence, she said.

* * *

(more)

In Bosnia, there has been another positive development stemming from the joint commission meeting assembled for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. The Commander of Sector Sarajevo, General Bachelet opened the road between the Serb-held districts in Sarajevo Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Government and Serb officials began talks on Tuesday on the opening of new access roads to the Bosnian capital. Meanwhile the utility situation in Sarajevo was moderately good, according to a United Nations spokesman. Electricity was on full-time, water was available a few hours a day and gas every other day.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said the United Nations was currently far from having a rapid reaction capability, despite the fact that there was no lack of willingness, among member States, to make troops and equipment available for peace-keeping operations. In a report on standby arrangements for peace-keeping, the Secretary-General welcomed recent initiatives by member States to address the issue, either individually or in partnership with other States.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the Secretariat would continue its dialogue with Governments with a view to broadening the geographical base of available resources and obtaining information necessary to facilitate and accelerate the organization, planning and deployment of peace-keeping operations. The Secretary-General said the system of standby arrangements had proven most useful in its ability to expedite planning. The information provided had facilitated the process of identifying possible troop contributors and planning for deployment of troops and equipment.

* * *

The Committee against Torture has begun its fifteenth session in Geneva. It is examining information that appears to contain well-founded indications that torture was being systematically practiced in a State party to the Convention. The Committee will also consider communications from individuals claiming to be victims of a violation by a State party of the provisions of the Convention.

The Committee was briefed on the results of the various readings by the open-ended working group on the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Committee's Rapporteur, Bent Sorensen, expert from Denmark, who participated in the meeting of the working group, said the process for the realization of the protocol might take more than 10 years. Its aim would be to reinforce preventive measures against torture through field inspections of States parties by experts who would be designated for that purpose.

* *** *